JULY 22, 2005

CHAIRMAN PRINCIPI
BRAC

DCN: 5795

NONE OF THE DISCUSSIONS YOU AND YOUR COMMISSIONERS HAVE HAD WITH MONTANA'S REPRESENTATIVES (SENATOR BAUCUS, BURNS AND GENERAL MOSLEY, OTHERS) HAVE ADDRESSED THE NOISE AND SAFETY ISSUES MENTIONED IN MY LETTER OF JUNE 24, 2005, SO I SUGGEST THAT YOU ASK THEM!

Darol D. Bennett

(1)

Darold L. Bennett
5305, 6th Avenue South
Great Falls, MT 59405-3923
(406)-727-1043

June 24, 2005

Anthony Principi
Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC)
Department of Defense
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

BRAC Commission
JUL 25 2005
Received

Dear Chairman Principi:

I live near the Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana, runway and can attest to the fact that moving the obsolete fleet of F-16 jets from the Great Falls International Airport to Malmstrom in lieu of sending to bases in Iowa and Alabama as recommended by the Pentagon is a totally unacceptable solution to those of us who would have to deal with this decision and have our lives ruined by the noise and unsafe conditions the F-16 jets would present using Malmstrom's runway. Malmstrom's runway is probably built anywhere from 3 to 5 miles to close to the residences and businesses in East Great Falls and base housing units and work facilities located near the perimeter of the runway now, and as a result we must bear the brunt of the noise the F-16 jets would emit during take off and landing as well as face the probabilities of an errant jet with an inflight emergency crashing on or in the immediate area of our homes, work places and schools or in the midst of the city. We can't allow ourselves to get into a position where this could happen!

Furthermore, the F-16 jets will do the same things the KC 135s did before the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) closed Malmstrom's runway in 1995 which includes emitting

Darold L. Bennett
5305, 6th Avenue South
Great Falls MT 59405-3923
(406)-727-1043

June 24, 2005

outrageous noises caused by weather inversions and poor accoustics partly because of the valley we are in - a public nuisance if I ever seen one - that brought about house shakings, sheetrock and masonry mortar cracks, window glass and wall decoration movements which made our lives a living hell, yet the Air Force always denied responsibility when called on the carpet for their actions by irrate citizens who could not get the state, county or the city to do anything about the noisy KC-135s. Now that the KC-135s are gone, we must contend with the every present low flying, noise making, two-engine Huey helicopters piloted by officers with absolutely no respect for our serenity - these people need a job!!! Contrary to the briefings you and your fellow commissioners received in Portland, Oregon, on Friday, June 17, 2005, to keep Air Guard F-16 jets flying in Great Falls from Montana's Senators Max Baucus and Conrad Burns as well as Adjutant General Randy Mosley, the flying conditions out of the international airport and from Malmstrom's runway are far from ideal because of the weather inversions and poor accoustics I mentioned earlier, other problems exist such as snow, ice, fog, cross winds and wind shears in addition to the fact commercial developers are attempting to sell land off Highway 87/89/200 that extends to an area in the direct flight path of incoming and outgoing F-16 jets using Malmstrom's runway. (See the area I have marked in yellow on the city map of Great Falls. Also

Darold L. Bennett
5305, 6th Avenue South
Great Falls MT 59405-3923
(406)-727-1043

June 24, 2005

see the areas I have marked in yellow on the city map to show where I live and the base housing units and work facilities near the perimeter of Malmstrom's runway.)

Before BRAC closed Malmstrom's runway in 1995 there were isolated incidents of Canadian and American aircraft hotdogging, doing touch and gos and other unsafe stunts that the Air Force condoned that put everyone's life on the ground and in the air at risk. This could happen again if the F-16s are allowed to use Malmstrom's runway!!! The FAA does not control Malmstrom.

Senator Conrad Burns was notified of these noise problems and the structual damages they could cause when I sent him a letter on August 25, 1998 about my concerns with locating the X-33 at Malmstrom, a project Lockheed Martin later abandoned. I also notified the then Secretary of Defense (William Cohen) in the same letter. Burns is in denial and has chosen to ignore the fact that the Malmstrom runway should never be reopened unless it is completely rebuilt moving it 3 to 5 miles further Northeast closing down the present one entirely. To do otherwise - allow a flying mission or to move the F-16 jets from the international airport to Malmstrom - would bring about the same noise problems and unsafe conditions that existed when the KC-135s used the runway prior to BRAC closure in 1995. The Great Falls International Airport has a potpourri of noises

(4)

Darold L. Bennett
5305, 6th Avenue South
Great Falls MT 59405-3923
(406)-727-1043

June 24, 2005

and unsafe conditions that are similar to Malmstrom's so neither runway should be considered for a flying mission.

Chairman Principi the ball is in your court, but may I suggest that you contact the Pentagon to find out the real reason the 1995 BRAC closed Malmstrom's runway, if they will inform you, and proceed from there. Good Luck!

Respectfully Yours,

Darold L. Bennett

Darold L. Bennett

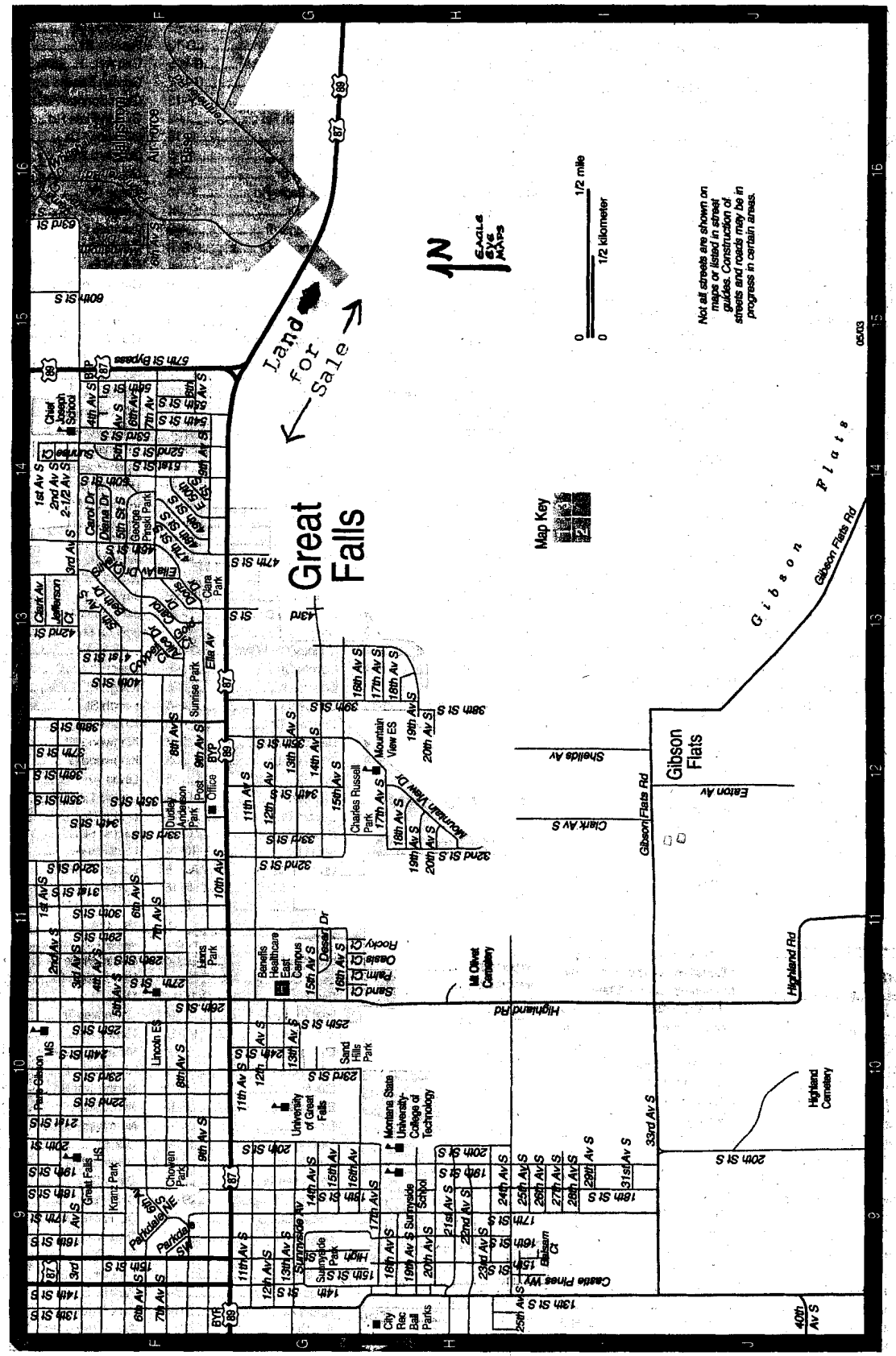
cc: Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
Pentagon
Washington DC 20330

Enclosures: 1/Great Falls City Map with Malmstrom AFB and Runway.

2/Great Falls Tribune Article "Montana makes case to keep MANG," Saturday, June 18, 2005.

Note: This letter was originally addressed as follows: Anthony Principi, Chairman, Base Realignment and Closure Commission, Department of Defense, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20330. It was sent by USPS Certified Mail Return Receipt Requested on June 25, 2005 to this address, but was not delivered and it came back to me on July 22, 2005.

Great Falls Street Map 4


Great Falls
Land for Sale
Gibson Flats
Gibson Flats Rd
Highland Rd
Highland Cemetery
Mt Olivet Cemetery
Map Key
1/2 mile
1/2 kilometer
Not all streets are shown on maps or listed in street guides. Construction of streets and roads may be in progress in certain areas.
EAGLE EYE MAPS
Montana State University-College of Technology
University of Great Falls
Charles Russell Park
Mountain View ES
Sunrise Park
Lincoln ES
Chief Joseph School
Great Falls HS
Benefits Healthcare East Campus
Sand Hills Park
Chowen Park
Krantz Park
Lions Park
Dudley Anderson Park
Post Office
Clara Park
George Pinski Park
Sunnyside Park
City Rec Ball Parks
Parkdale NE
Parkdale SW
Castle Pines Wy
Sheilds Av
Clark Av S
Eaton Av
Ella Av
Carol Dr
Diane Dr
Rocky Ct
Oasis Ct
Palm Ct
Sand Ct
Desert Dr
Mountain View Dr
Balsam Ct
Jefferson Ct
Clark Av
Sunrise Ct
Sunrise Dr
Sunrise Ct
Sunrise Dr
Sunrise Ct
Sunrise Dr

Enclosure 2/Darold L. Bennett/June 24, 2005

Engagement: Tom Cruise, Katie Holmes confirm plans /4A

Vital records

Find out how to document your stuff

Life at home

GREAT FALLS
TRIBUNE
A PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING NEWSPAPER
SATURDAY
www.greatfallstribune.com | No. 36 — 121st Year | June 18, 2005 | Great Falls, Montana — 50 cents

Belt action kicks off rodeo season

Arena improvements allow for better view /1S

JEFF MARN OF BELT

Montana makes case to keep MANG

Delegates pack punch into 30-minute presentation, answer commission questions

BRAC

By PETER JOHNSON
Tribune Staff Writer

Senior Montana officials made a strong case Friday in Portland that the Base Realignment and Closure Commission should keep Air Guard F-16 jets flying in Great Falls.

"I give a double thumbs up to Sen. Max Baucus, Sen. Conrad Burns and Montana Adjutant General Randy Mosley," said Mayor Randy Gray. "They only had 30 minutes to speak, so they coordinated their comments and all did just superb jobs."

The Montana representatives asked four BRAC commissioners to overturn the Pentagon's May 13 recommendation that six of the Montana Air National Guard's fighter jets be moved to Air National Guard bases in Iowa and Alabama, while the other nine be retired from service.

Burns

Baucus

Mosley

The Pentagon said that would mean a loss of 107 jobs, but MANG officials have said pulling their primary mission could result in the loss of as many as 500 jobs. MANG provides about 1,000 jobs, of which 350 are full-time.

The Montana delegates and a handful of Great Falls supporters in the audience were particularly pleased at the question that BRAC Commissioner Philip Coyle of California asked just as they wrapped up their case, nine seconds short of their 30-minute deadline.

Coyle, a former assistant secretary of defense, asked about the compatibility of shifting a flying mission from the Air National Guard at the airport to Malmstrom Air Force Base.

The trio of Montana officials readily agreed that it could work, noting that Malmstrom has a large, modern runway and hangars that were closed after it lost its aerial refueling tankers in the mid-1990s.

"It was just one commissioner's question, but we all agree it could be a major opening," Baucus said later. "It gives us the opportunity to meet individually with BRAC members and their staffs to help find a way to reopen Malmstrom's runway and maybe keep a MANG flying mission."

In a telephone news conference, Baucus said Friday's hearing might be the last for-

See BRAC, 7A

ONLINE·EXTRA

To read complete text of Burns, Baucus and Mosley's presentations to the commission today in Portland, Ore., see this story at **www.greatfallstribune.com.**

To get the latest headlines, hear audio and see a photo gallery go to the BRAC section.

BRAC: Vulnerability, air space part of discussion

FROM 1A

mal means for Montana to express its concerns, but that he, Burns and their staffs would keep seeking individual meetings with the nine BRAC commissioners and their staff.

"We have become lobbyists," Burns quipped.

Burns aide Mike Brown said his boss hopes the commission will look at the "big picture." Since Malmstrom's primary mission, operating land-based nuclear missiles, is expected to continue for at least 15 years, the military might as well transfer in a flying mission and make use of Malmstrom's 1,500-foot runway, too, he said.

"The commissioner's question was a huge first step in keeping a flying mission for MANG and reopening the Malmstrom runway," agreed Cynthia Schultz, director of the Great Falls International Airport.

With the Pentagon's stated goal of combining related flying missions, such as fighters, bombers and tankers, at the same facility, it even could lead to additional flying missions, she said.

Schultz pointed out that the Pentagon targeted MANG because it lacked such ground-based assets as large fuel storage, which are easier for a military base to provide than a civilian airport.

Schultz said Thursday's news that the Homeland Security Department could open a Northern Border Air Wing in Great Falls by next year also should boost the chances of maintaining a MANG fighter wing to support the border protection.

Baucus said the four commissioners present listened attentively. He sensed that they were sympathetic, "probably because they have been hearing the same story from other delegations across the country that Air Guard flying units were hit too hard in the Pentagon recommendations."

Of 88 Air Guard flying units across the country, 28 are slated to lose their planes.

Besides Coyle, others on the nine-member commission who attended the Portland hearing were: Chairman Anthony Principi, former secretary of Veteran Affairs; James Bilbray, a former Democratic U.S. representative from Nevada; and James Hansen of Utah, a former Republican U.S. representative.

Burns and Baucus said they believe a simple majority of five commissioners is required to overturn a Pentagon realignment recommendation.

The three Montana officials covered different aspects in their testimony.

Baucus criticized the "unprecedented drawdown" of fighter and carrier units the Pentagon recommended at several Air Guard units across the country. He said fighters at MANG and other Air Guard sites would be eliminated before sufficient newer, more expensive jets are available, leaving the country vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Burns highlighted benefits that Montana offers for air training missions; including uncongested airfields and huge training space.

Mosley, who holds a duel state and federal role, agreed, saying if Montana's air training space were placed over Florida, it would cover much of the state.

Montana's space is even better than small air training spaces in urban parts of the country in which training crews almost have to maneuver more to land and take off than they do in the actual combat training, he added.

Mosley said the BRAC process is necessary to get rid of installations that no longer are needed, but he believes the criteria was "skewed against the smaller installations typically associated with Air National Guard facilities and against the less popular areas of the United States."

Before the hearing, Mosley said it's still hard to tell just how many MANG jobs would be lost if the jets are shifted or retired.

Such a change could impact as many as 200 of the 350 full-time employees and another 300 of 1,000 traditional, or part-time, Guard members.

That would hurt the Great Falls and Montana economy, he said, and drive many experienced pilots and maintenance people from military service.

"We strongly believe that our people won't want to commute to Iowa or Alabama for monthly training," he said.

Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., submitted a written statement saying he is "very concerned about the recommendation to dismantle the 120th Fighter Wing."

Realigning F-16s from MANG and other states would hinder protection of the northern border and make it harder to retain and attract top Air Guard personnel in Great Falls, he said.

Reach Tribune Staff Writer Peter Johnson at (406) 791-1476 or pejohnso@greatfal.gannett.com.

Enclosure 2/Darold L. Bennett/June 24, 2005